

and we have not got a very clear answer from the Minister. This question pertains to environment as well as fishing. There are also traditional fishermen who have been carrying out this business. The figure of Rs. 3,000 crore as foreign exchange earning which has been quoted by the hon. Minister, has largely come from traditional fishing, not necessarily from aquaculture. How are we going to protect the environment without exempting the traditional fishermen from the rigorous provision of CRZ? Is the Government aware that there are so many towns in coastal Maharashtra in which on the one side there is a sea and on the other side there is a creek, and all the towns lying in between are between CRZ-1 and CRZ-2? Is the Government thinking of exempting these towns as well as the traditional fishermen who cannot even repair their own dilapidated houses, from the rigorous provision of CRZ? CRZ says that they cannot even reconstruct the houses. While protecting the interests of these people, is the Government also thinking of protecting the interests of these small traditional fishermen from the rigorous provision of CRZ?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that as far as traditional shrimp farmers are concerned.....(Interruptions)

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : I am talking about fishermen.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Yes, it was not against the traditional fisherman about whom the Supreme Court also agreed in this judgement. So, the Bill that is coming before us, will be comprehensive, taking care of all shrimp cultivation.

As far as the people who will pollute are concerned, the polluter will pay the principal that has been established further by the hon. Supreme Court. That is already incorporated in the Bill.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : But are you exempting the traditional fishermen from the rigorous provision of CRZ?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : The Bill that will come before you has a provision that shrimp cultivation will be allowed afresh under licence that will be issued by the Ministry of Agriculture. It will be beyond 200 metres of high-tide line.

As far as people causing pollution are concerned, they will be taken care of. As far as traditional farmers are concerned, they will be protected. There is no dispute about that.

DR. ASIM BALA : Sir, the Government is earning a lot of foreign exchange from the export of prawn. But it is being threatened due to the communicable diseases to prawn. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any quarantine arrangement before exporting the prawn abroad or not. What is the arrangement for quarantine from the Ministry of Environment and Forest?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Sir, the guidelines already prepared and available with the Ministry of Agriculture are very comprehensive. These guidelines take care of everything like pollution etc. The quarantine is just an integral part of that. Properly graded fish or shrimp will be exported.

DR. ASIM BALA : Who is in charge of quarantine? Is it the Ministry of Environment and Forest or the Ministry of Agriculture or any other Department?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Sir there has been basic confusion about this. I am answering the question because it was raised to my Ministry. I am in charge of controlling pollution.

As far as cultivation is concerned which is a part of fishing, it comes under the Ministry of Agriculture. The guidelines are from them. The guidelines take care about the quarantine.

[Translation]

Import/Export of Wheat

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*183. SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT :
SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the quantity of wheat imported/exported during 1996-97 till date and likely to be imported/exported in the near future;

(b) the countries from which it is imported ;

(c) whether the Government propose to import wheat despite the bumper production of wheat;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether the FCI has raised any objection regarding the quality of wheat imported;

(f) the quantity of wheat likely to be available for PDS; and

(g) the steps taken by the Government to curb the import of wheat ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) to (g) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) During 1996-97 till date, Government imported 17.51 lakh tonnes of wheat. In 1996-97, private traders/public sector undertakings exported 10.94 lakh tonnes of wheat. Government is likely to import 1 million tonnes of wheat in the near future. Export of wheat during 1997-98 has been banned.

(b) Australia, Canada and Argentina.

(c) and (d) Government, after considering various factors, like augmenting availability in the country to meet the requirement for Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS), maintaining stocks according to buffer norms and to contain open market prices, authorised FCI/STC to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat during 1997-98. Of this, STC has contracted for import of 1 million tonnes from Australia.

(e) No. Sir. However, FCI has informed STC that the wheat imported from Argentina contained more percentage of damaged grains than the specifications laid down in the contract. STC has obtained compensation for the damaged wheat from the Argentinean suppliers.

(f) As on 1-7-1997, the stock of wheat in the Central Pool was 109.90 lakh tonnes. The requirement under TPDS during 1997-98 is estimated at 75 lakh tonnes.

(g) All efforts are being made to increase production of wheat and procurement for the Central Pool. Minimum Support Price has been raised from R. 380/- Per quintal in 1996-97 to Rs. 415/- in 1997-98, and bonus of Rs. 60/- per quintal has also been given raising the procurement price of wheat during 1997-98 to Rs. 475/- per quintal. As against 81.8 lakh tonnes of wheat procured in 1996-97, around 92.60 lakh tonnes have been procured in 1997-98.

SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reply given by the hon. Minister to this question is not satisfactory. There is difference of opinion in the Cabinet also on this issue. The Minister of Agriculture says and we also know it that there has been large increase in the production of foodgrains in the country and there was no need of importing wheat as such. But due to wrong distribution system and wrong policy of the Government the wheat which should have been procured by the Government for its warehouses, the Government could not do that. Therefore the farmers of this country have been exploited by importing wheat and it has been imported paying exorbitant rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, all sorts of weeds have been found in the wheat imported from Argentina and Australia and poisonous grains have also been detected therein. Therefore, I want to ask the hon. Minister as to how much increase has been there in the production of wheat and rice

during the last three years and the quantity stored against the central pool with the State Governments during the last three years and the quantum of storage of wheat and rice under the union Government in the country and if it was in excess, the reasons for importing wheat and rice.

SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH : Sir, 62 lakh million tonnes of wheat was produced last year and this year 65 lakh million tonnes wheat has been produced. Last year 81 lakh tonnes of wheat was procured and this year procurement of wheat was 92.50 lakh tonnes.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to the main question of the hon. member as to whether weeds and poisonous grains were detected in the wheat imported from Argentina and Australia ?

SHRI THAWAR GHAND GEHLOT : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, weeds and poisonous grains were found in the wheat imported from Argentina and Australia and for which the Government had got compensation from these countries but the Government distributed the same poisonous wheat among the people of the country. Why they did so, the hon. Minister should atleast reply to this.

SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the question is not specific, the answer will also not be specific. So this is not the case here. The hon. Member wanted an account of production and procurement of wheat. That I have given. Now, let me also tell about the import of wheat. Last year in 1996-97, 17 lakh tonnes of wheat was imported and we have decided to import 10 lakh tonnes of wheat this year..... (Interruptions)

SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT : Sir, though this is a very important question but the members could not get sufficient time to ask supplementary questions and we have very less time at our disposal to ask questions. Therefore, my submission is that half an hour discussion should be held on this issue. And I am giving a notice for having half an hour discussion on this(Interruptions)

SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. members ask their questions turn by turn, certainly I can reply their each and every question within a minute, but if they are going to ask questions simultaneously like this, it is not possible for me to reply to their questions..... (Interruptions)

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Storage Capacity

*184. SHRI CHHATAR SINGH DARBAR :
SHRI SOUMYA RANJAN :

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proper arrangements for storing the foodgrains under PDS to fulfil the demand of the poor people;